

The Last Call

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The Last Call

by [crystalSkiez](#)

Summary

Wilbur gets a call from a dying Theseus and doesn't know what to do

Chapter 1

Wilbur Soot is going to die.

Mostly because Phil is going to absolutely murder him when he finds out how royally he fucked up. And that's saying something. Wilbur fucks up a lot.

Don't get him wrong, he's good at his job. Even as a kid he had a way with words, sweet-talking maids into smuggling him sweet buns and beguiling guards to turn a blind eye as he skipped out on lessons. Rascal, they used to call him, a silver-tongued devil.

The gift has only grown stronger throughout the years. Now, they call him the Snake Charmer. The Siren.

But it's still not easy. While Wilbur believes, while he has to believe, that their cause is good, the motives of the people they must work with...they're not nearly as pure. Sometimes he snaps. He fucks up.

Phil is usually pretty understanding. He's always been a kind soul, patient, and he's been dealing with the gangs and the crime and their stubborn, obstinate leaders for far longer than him. He gets it, why talking with them puts Wilbur on edge, and takes everything in stride. He's only even scolded Wilbur a handful of times, and truly yelled at him less than that. But this...

Phil had warned him it was a terrible idea. Repeatedly. Even Techno, who usually stayed frustratingly neutral on their tiffs, had voiced his disapproval of Wilbur's plan for Theseus. And Wilbur had insisted on going through with it.

So yeah. Phil's going to murder him.

Which, by the way, where the fuck is he? Wilbur checks the clock on his holopad anxiously, his foot tapping an erratic pattern against the tiled floor. He pressed the emergency button on it nearly fifteen minutes ago. Where are they? They both know the drill. You don't opt out when the emergency button is pressed, no exceptions. They should be here by now. They *need* to be here.

Another minute passes. The room stays empty. Anxiety climbs up his throat, choking his breath, a nervous energy that Wilbur channels into pacing. He needs to be doing something. Not just sitting here, waiting.

Theseus...he had sounded bad. Really bad. The whole call had been a jumbled mess of stuttered apologies and slurred explanations, sharp gasps and tiny whimpers of pain. Who knows what happened to him. Who knows how much time he has left.

Wilbur needs to help. He needs to be doing something.

He can't do anything with Techno and Phil not here.

He's stuck. All he can do is sit here and think about the fresh blood that might very well be on his hands.

All he can do is wait. And worry. Wilbur keeps pacing.

Techno arrives first, storming through the kitchen door with wild eyes, already searching for a threat, and Wilbur realizes with a start just exactly why it took so long for him to arrive.

"You put on a fucking *cape*?" he gawks.

Techno, to his credit, has the decency to look guilty.

"It's part of my gear." He responds, eyeing the way Wilbur is pacing with caution.

"I said it was an emergency!" Wilbur shrieks, and he can feel the panic start to rise up in his throat again, because they are *running out of time*. Theseus could be dying, could already be dead, for all he knows. Prime, he never meant for this to happen.

Well.

Maybe in the beginning, yeah, Theseus could have died and he wouldn't have cared but--*no*, wait that's not what he meant, he didn't want Theseus to, to *die*, not really but...

Okay. So he had. Just a little.

He was a horrible person. Prime, this whole thing was so fucked.

Where the fuck was Phil?

"Techno, you can't," He breathes, trying to make him understand the urgency of the situation, "We need to--you don't understand."

Technoblade's been around Wilbur long enough to know when he's on the verge of a freak out. He leans closer to Wilbur's hunched form. His hand settles on Wilbur's shoulder.

"Hey. Will. Hey." he murmurs gently, "Calm down for me, okay? What's wrong?"

"We...I need Phil." Wilbur gasps, "Where's Phil?"

Wilbur hears the door hiss open. Of course, this is the instant Phil chooses to arrive.

"Boys?" he asks, and then he must spot the two of them huddled together because his voice shifts to something more concerned. "Wilbur?"

"He won't tell me what's wrong." Technoblade tells Phil from somewhere above him.

Phil draws closer, crouches down so he can see Wilbur's face. His wings tap against the tiled floor. "What's happening, Will? What's the emergency?"

The emergency. Theseus. They need to find Theseus. He needs to explain it.

It's enough to snap Wilbur out of the panic. He lifts his head and looks up at the two of them. "Theseus. It's Theseus. He called me."

The room goes as tense as a live wire. All of them know what it means, calling them at 0600 in the morning, and it's nothing good. All of them know that they still need him.

Any ease, any relaxation that had been shared between them vanishes in an instant. It's business time.

"What did he say?" Phil asks tersely, already shifting his wings, preparing them for flight. Techno fastens his mask of bone around the upper half of his face, laces up his boots.

"He apologized. Said he had failed." Wilbur pauses. "It sounded like a goodbye. He--he hung up."

If it's even possible, the air in the room gets even more strained.

"Do you have his location?" Techno asks, tucking a dagger into his boot, slipping another into his belt.

Wilbur nods, short and sharp. "I activated the tracker in his emergency beacon."

"Good. Let's go." Techno replies, turning to leave. Phil lingers.

"Will..." Phil doesn't say it out loud, he's too kind for that, but his eyes are disappointed enough that Wilbur knows what he means. Phil had told him that his plan for Theseus was a mistake, and Wilbur ignored him. Now they're paying the price.

They still need Theseus. They need him alive. Their entire mission might depend on it.

And it's all screwed up. Because of Wilbur. He ducks his head. "I know. I'm sorry. It's my fault."

There and then, he promises himself he's going to save Theseus if it's the last thing he does.

Wilbur's never liked the slums.

He realizes that makes him sound like a pretentious asshole, he really does, but in his defense...

Well, he doesn't really have a defense. He just doesn't like the slums.

They remind him too much of the fall of Lmanburg, cluttered and chaotic, people lying dead or dying on the sides of the streets, the guards sweeping the alleyways with the beams of their flashlights.

He'd hid from them too once, a long time ago.

He doesn't like the slums.

This is where the tracker in Theseus's emergency beacon has led them though, so here they are, prowling through the streets at the dead of night. They must make an odd group, the three of them. Wilbur and his trenchcoat, Phil and his wings, Techno and his--well, just his everything really. They've scared away half a dozen beggars already on looks alone.

Thankfully, there's not much else on the streets at this time of night. They're free to follow Wilbur's holopad to the tracker without any interference.

Except when they get to where the tracker points an hour later, there's absolutely nothing there.

There's buildings, sure. Alleyways and nooks and run-down shacks. It's the slums, after all.

But Wilbur's tracker is remarkably accurate. It was made to be. And it's not pointing to any of those. It's pointing to a random spot in the street. There's nothing there at all.

Wilbur glances back at Phil.

He shrugs, and his wings rise with the movement. "I don't know, mate. Maybe it's not working?"

"It's fucking working, Phil." Wilbur snaps back before he can stop himself, "I tested it. You tested it. Theseus should be right...."

He walks to the exact spot the holopad is showing him the tracker is located. "Here."

There's nothing there, nothing except a few metal bins and a sewage grate.

Wilbur looks back up at Phil, who seems just as lost as him. Technoblade, on the other hand, walks right up to where Wilbur is standing and crouches next to him.

He reaches a hand toward the sewage grate.

Wilbur gawks at him. "Do you *want* flesh-eating bacteria? Get your hand out of there!"

Technoblade ignores him, pulling something small and red and blinking from just inside the grate.

The emergency beacon.

Wilbur is pacing again. Phil and Technoblade watch him from one side of the street.

"I should have known. Should have known he would figure out we put a tracker inside." He mutters, running a hand through his hair. "Prime, I'm an idiot."

"What now?" Techno asks, "He could be anywhere. We have no chance."

It sounds too much like an admission of defeat for his liking. Wilbur's eyes shoot to him. "We can't stop looking. We need to find him. *We're going to find him.*"

Technoblade opens his mouth to snap something back and Phil, thankfully, steps in. "Of course, mate, of course. We're not leaving him."

He gives Technoblade a meaningful glance.

The other man throws his hands up into the air. "Phil, what are we supposed to do? Thousands of people live in the slums, and we have no idea how far Theseus hid the tracker from his home. It could take hours to find him. He could already be dead by now, for all we know."

Phil is unwavering. "We'll split up. We can cover more ground that way."

His wings flutter behind him and Wilbur realizes just exactly what he intends to do. For once, he and Technoblade are in agreement.

"We can't." Wilbur protests, "Someone will see you."

"I'll stay low. You two go the other way."

"Phil--" Techno starts and Phil shakes his head firmly, cutting him off.

"Go. Find him." He turns away. Wilbur and Techno have no choice but to listen.

And then they're off. Philza spreads his great metal wings and soars into the air, and he and Technoblade disappear into the night.

They're walking through the streets--running, really--looking for any clue of where Theseus could be when Techno falters. Stops.

Wilbur sees the blood a second later.

His skin goes cold. Dread pools in his gut.

It's a whole pool of it, dark and fresh and wet, and though the blood could be from anywhere--again, it is the slums--Wilbur has a sinking feeling that he knows exactly who that blood came from.

Oh fuck. Fuck. Theseus...he doesn't deserve this. Wilbur's worked with bad people. People who kill on a whim, who live to corrupt and crush. People without souls.

Theseus is not one of them.

It was hard to believe it at first, mostly because he didn't want to, but Theseus is *good*. Not just good at his job, but genuinely, sickeningly *good*. He's sharp and interesting, and surprisingly...nice. Sure, he acts like he isn't, hides all of it beneath layers and layers of

derision and sarcasm, but between the business meetings and heist plans, Wilbur has talked with the man. Really talked with him. And Theseus has told him things.

How he'd made a habit of using up his precious food supplies to feed the stray cats roaming the street and now they won't leave him alone. How he found a golden compass while he was scrapping one day and thought it was so cool that he hung it on his wall instead of pawning it off. How he refuses to steal from any of the other beggars in the slums because he knows they need everything just as much as he does.

He's a good man. In another world, Wilbur likes to think they could have been friends.

He doesn't deserve any of the shit Wilbur's put him through. Wilbur just realized that a little too late. And now Technoblade and him are following a trail of Theseus's blood.

Wilbur fears the guilt might eat him alive.

The trail of blood ends at a seemingly innocuous bakery, trailing up a ladder on the side. Both of them go silent. Alert. The threat could still be near.

Techno gestures at him to stay at the bottom of the building with one sharp hand signal, and Wilbur listens. Techno has always been the better fighter. Best for him to handle any threats without Wilbur getting in his way.

But then a minute passes, and then another, and Wilbur doesn't hear any signs of a struggle from up on the roof, and curiosity and worry war with his sense of reason.

Surely he would have heard some sort of commotion by now if there was any danger.

He climbs up the ladder and hoists himself over the edge.

He can see Techno standing in the doorway of a tiny storage room, staring at something out of his view. He's pale, too pale, and Wilbur knows that can't be good. Something's gone wrong.

Screw waiting around. He needs to be in there, figuring this out.

"Is this it?" he calls and Techno's gaze shoots to him. He's alarmed, a little rattled; Wilbur can see it in his eyes, in the way they keep flickering back and forth between him and whatever's in the room, in the way his entire body has tensed.

Something is wrong. Whatever is in that room, Wilbur needs to see it. He needs to know.

"I'm coming in." he tells Techno, already speed walking toward the doorway, and the man goes stiff.

Techno makes his decision, stepping just in front of Wilbur, blocking his path. "You won't want to see this."

His eyes are frantic in a way that's usually reserved for when Phil or him get injured, a look that Wilbur's only seen a few times. Like Techno knows whatever's in the room will break

him.

Wilbur thinks it's a bit much. An overreaction. Techno doesn't need to shield him.

Worst case scenario, Theseus is dead. And it will be upsetting, sure, but Wilbur's seen dead bodies before. Hell, he's *killed* before. Techno is wrong: he can handle this. He needs to handle this. Theseus was his responsibility after all.

So he asks again, firmer this time. "Is it him?"

Techno's shoulders sag. He nods.

He knows he isn't winning this fight, not tonight. He steps back just enough for Wilbur to enter. "Don't say I didn't warn you."

There's no hesitation. Wilbur shoves past him into the room, searching the tiny space, gaze flitting from place to place. Something small and curled up and *red* twitches in the corner of his eye, and Wilbur turns toward it.

And then he sees him. Theseus.

He doesn't want to believe it.

Techno was right.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

They've found Theseus, and with that comes horrifying realization

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

He's holding what looks like an attempt at a gun, shaking violently as he points it towards Wilbur's head.

For just a minute Wilbur hopes, *prays*, that this is just some random kid they've stumbled upon and not their Theseus. As if that would make the scene before them any better.

Because, in front of him, curled up into a shitty office chair, is a child.

He's clearly been through some sort of trauma-- his breaths are shaky and far too shallow, a trail of blood weaves down his head, and his arms... one is wrapped around his stomach like he's hugging himself, the other propped awkwardly against the side of the chair, broken so badly Wilbur can see bone. His hair is gray and ashy, his eyes full, his face sharp and gaunt. The few glimpses of skin Wilbur can spot are a myriad of color: the plum of bruises, the crimson of blood, the cloudy gray and brown of dust and grime, covering his skin.

For the first time in years, Wilbur prays.

Please, he thinks, Please don't let this boy be him. I'll start worship again, I'll do whatever it takes. Just please don't let this be on me.

But then Wilbur sees the spark of recognition in the kid's eyes, the way he is looking at Wilbur like he knows him and is *terrified* of him, and he knows. He knows.

He can't move. He can barely breathe.

He's vaguely aware that Techno is still lingering behind him, vaguely aware that the boy's gun is still leveled at his head, but he's frozen in place. All he can wonder is what he could possibly have done to make this child so scared of him.

Wilbur is not the one to break the silence.

“I'll shoot.” The man--the *boy*--croaks.

He is talking to him. To them. Threatening them.

And Wilbur is confused.

Why would he threaten them?

They're here to help him, to *save* him. You don't shoot your rescuers. That's just like, common sense.

Maybe he had mistaken the look in the boy's eyes. Was this really just some random kid? And if so, what the fuck was he supposed to do then? They couldn't just leave him here.

“I-I'll shoot. I'll do it. Back off.” The boy repeats, and this time Wilbur is sure it is recognition that he hears in his tone.

This boy knows him. So why the hell is he pointing his gun at them, looking at them like at any moment they'll gut him with a knife?

And then realization hits. Wilbur feels sick.

Because the boy thinks... he thinks they're going to kill him. Right now. He thinks they've made some like, team outing just to murder him.

Dear Prime.

Wilbur turns to Techno. “Call Phil. Tell him we found him.”

Technoblade's mouth tilts downward, but Wilbur's not done. “Do it outside.”

Techno wants to argue. Wilbur can see it in his eyes.

“Wil--” he starts and Wilbur gives him The Look. The one that says that this isn't up for debate.

Techno's always been a strategist. He knows how to choose his battles. A twirl of his cape and he's gone.

And then it's him and the boy. Alone.

“Theseus?” He has to ask, just to be sure.

The boy's eyes widen. He shakes his head rapidly, desperately.

Wilbur knows he's lying before he even opens his mouth.

“No.”

And then the truth of the situation hits. Hard.

For the last month and a half, Wilbur has been trying to kill a child.

And Theseus must recognize that on some level, because otherwise there's no reason for him to be so terrified. Theseus knows who he is, knows that he would be dead if Wilbur had his

way, knows that he is devastatingly outmatched right now, and despite everything he's still pointing his little weapon at Wilbur's head. Still defiant in the face of overwhelming despair.

In that instant, Wilbur knows he has claimed him. This boy, brave enough to be Theseus and clever enough to hide it from the world, is *his*.

There's no hesitation, no second guessing. Phil and Techno will come around. They won't have a choice. Like it or not, this boy is coming home with them.

Wilbur is going to fix this.

The boy must misinterpret his stony silence, because his gaze shifts and his lip wobbles. "You know I'm already dead right?"

Wilbur falters. "What?"

The boy looks far too resigned for Wilbur's liking. "You don't need to kill me. I'm already dead."

"I--what--we're not--" he stutters, because somehow he has forgotten that Theseus thinks they are here to *murder* him, and it's probably important to clarify that before anything else.

But then Theseus lifts the arm that has been curled around him, gesturing towards his stomach, and Wilbur realizes what he means.

Wilbur hadn't thought this day could get worse, but that's a fucking bullet wound right there.

Oh Prime. He's really fucked this whole thing. Phil's never going to forgive him.

Wilbur's never going to forgive himself.

"You've been shot." He says, like a complete idiot. As if the boy doesn't already know.

But Theseus just nods. "I don't have much time left. So if you could just--*please* just--" His voice breaks on the word. "You don't need to kill me. You can just leave. I'm dying."

And that's when Wilbur realizes the sheer amount of blood covering the room. Far too much for any of the cuts and scrapes on the boy's body. Far too much for the head wound, the tiny track of blood trickling down his cheek.

It's enough blood to kill.

He turns, staring numbly at it all, and then he spots something far more concerning.

A flag. His flag. Plastered against the wall, a little scrappy, burnt around the edges, but still there nonetheless.

He hates to admit it, but for a moment, he forgets about the boy.

What the fuck is a Lmanburg flag doing in Theseus's room?

He'd thought Schlatt had burnt them all a decade ago. It's been years since he's seen one in the flesh.

He wants to cry. He wants to touch it. He wants to grab Theseus by the shoulders and shake him and make him explain where the hell he got a Lmanburg flag and why he hung it so obviously in his room.

He doesn't get the chance.

There's a flash of movement in his peripheral vision, a blur of black and red and gold rushing towards him, and on pure instinct Wilbur shifts towards it. And then he catches sight of what, exactly, is pouncing at him. And then he realizes that it's not so much pouncing as falling.

Wilbur lunges.

And he catches Theseus. Something is clutched in his hand-- a sharp, rusty screwdriver--and it clatters to the ground.

The boy. Had he just tried to *shank* him?

Wilbur can't find it in himself to care, not when the boy is in his arms whimpering in pain and delirium. Not when his breaths are getting shorter by the second.

And then, just for an instant, his breaths go silent. Wilbur panics.

He flips the boy over in his arms so he can get a good look at his face.

His eyes are blank, unseeing. Two of Wilbur's fingers fly to the boy's neck. His hands are shaking so badly it takes him three tries to find a pulse. It's there, just barely, but it's slowing. The boy is still dying.

No. Not him. Not on his watch.

This boy can't die. Wilbur won't let him.

"Techno!" He screams, "Technoblade!"

The boy feels so much smaller in his arms than he looked. His skin is cold, too cold. Wilbur pulls him closer, cradles him to his chest and feels the first hint of warmth when something wet and sticky pools in his lap. Blood.

Techno rushes into the room. In the same instant, Theseus gasps out a waking breath.

His eyes go wide and panicked, flickering left and right, never focusing on any one thing and Wilbur's hands shift to support the kid's neck like he's a baby.

"Theseus," he breathes, trying to grab the kids attention, trying to calm him down, "Theseus."

It's no use. His eyes flit everywhere but Wilbur.

Wilbur looks up at Technoblade. He's frozen in the doorway, watching the scene play out in shock.

"Techno, he's dying." he whispers, and it sounds for all the world like he's begging. As if Techno can somehow magically fix this like he fixes everything else. "He's just a kid. He's dying. *Help him.*"

Techno is kneeling at the kid's side in three long strides, hands hovering over his body like the boy is too fragile to touch.

He looks up at Wilbur, brows pinched. "What do I do?"

The fragile hope in Wilbur's chest shatters. Techno doesn't know what's wrong. He doesn't know how to fix this. Wilbur's always been the gentlest of the trio, after all. Techno's always been better suited to threats and battle and violence. Wilbur is the healer, not Techno.

But Wilbur doesn't know how to help the boy either, not when his life is already slipping away.

"His stomach. Put pressure on the wound." he says anyway, because he's stubborn, "Phil's coming. Right?"

Techno nods and Wilbur grasps onto the phrase in his mind desperately. Phil is coming. They just need to hold out until Phil gets here.

Wilbur's hands shift to cup Theseus's face, and like a flip has been switched the boy's blue eyes refocus, pupils shifting to lock on Wilbur's face.

Progress. This is progress. Maybe if Wilbur says it enough he can convince himself it's true.

"That's it." he whispers, "That's it. Just stay awake for me, okay kid? Don't close your eyes."

The kid blinks at him. Wilbur's thumb brushes against his cheek and the boy presses into it.

His heart might shatter. He can feel his hands shaking violently as they cradle Theseus's head.

The boy blinks again, slower this time. Too late, Wilbur realizes his breaths have slowed again.

"No." Wilbur gasps out, "No, no, don't close your eyes. Don't you dare. Hold on, kid. Just hold on."

The boy's eyes flutter. It would almost be peaceful if not for the pool of blood, the crimson coating Wilbur's hands.

Wilbur just cradles him closer.

"Theseus," he whispers, "Theseus. Don't, don't go, just. Breathe. Okay? Breathe. Come on."

The boy's eyes shut, and Wilbur is sure he is dead.

Chapter End Notes

welp this has been split into three parts now i suppose.
full disclosure i already have the last chapter finished and it will be posted later tonight,
this was just too good of a cliffhanger for me to pass up

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Theseus is saved, but it doesn't help the guilt

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The boy is not dead. That much is clear as Technoblade wrestles his limp body out of Wilbur's arms, as he pulls Wilbur to his feet, as he rushes the three of them back to the Underground without even waiting for Phil.

When they make it back to their base an eternity later the boy is still just barely clinging to life, and they call in the Captain to patch him up.

"He'll live." She tells them an hour later as she pulls off red-stained rubber gloves, but her face is grave, her eyes shadowed.

The Captain has always had a soft spot for kids.

She glares at Wilbur before she storms off, like the broken child on the cot is all his fault. Wilbur thinks that she's not too far off.

After she and Techno leave Wilbur sits and stares at the boy. Even in sleep he is restless, turning this way and that, his face scrunching up, faint whimpers echoing through the room.

Wilbur can't watch. He can't look away.

This is all his fault.

So he stays. Forces himself to watch. It feels like penance.

In the end it takes Technoblade to make him leave. He needs rest, his brother tells him, practically dragging him out of the medbay room. It won't be happening, not anytime soon with the adrenaline and fear and desperation still coursing through him--but even if he could sleep Wilbur doesn't think he would want to. He can only imagine what will haunt his dreams.

So Techno drags him into the library and throws an old classical book into his lap instead. It's a typical Techno move. When all else fails, resort to books and brute force.

And then they hear the scream.

Trust this boy to be the one who wakes up four hours earlier than the meds should have allowed. They find him pointing the jagged end of a wine bottle--Wilbur's wine bottle--at Phil in the kitchen, looking like a cornered animal about to go feral.

It takes an embarrassingly long time for the three of them to subdue him.

They're the most dangerous men in the known world, for Prime's sake. It shouldn't be this difficult to catch one kid.

But then again, usually they're trying to hurt their target. Not this time. Phil can't exactly throw one of his razor sharp feathers at a fucking kid. Wilbur can't exactly pull out his revolver.

Technoblade clearly didn't get the memo, though, because he grabs onto his ankle and the kid goes down hard.

Wilbur whacks him in the shoulder for that one. "Nice going champ."

"I'm surprised you could see it from where you were lying on the floor." The man replies, hoisting the kid's limp body onto a chair, "At least I did something."

Low blow. It's not like Wilbur meant to get tripped into Phil. The kid is just fast.

As Technoblade dabs alcohol on a new gash on the kid's head, Phil pulls Wilbur aside.

"He's Theseus." The man whispers urgently.

Wilbur cocks an eyebrow. He thought they had already established that. Maybe old age was hitting Phil a little harder than he thought.

The pause is long enough to show Phil he hasn't gotten his point. The man's eyebrows scrunch up in frustration.

"No, Will," he says, gazing intently into his eyes, "He's *Theseus*."

And that's when it clicks.

The boy is Theseus. The Theseus that they need for their mission. The Theseus that everything depends on.

"No." Wilbur snaps, "Never. Absolutely not. He's just a kid."

He gestures sharply at the kid, tied up in their kitchen, slumped over in a chair. "Look at him, Phil. Haven't we done enough? We'll find another way. I don't care. Not him. I'm not putting that *literal* kid into danger again."

Phil nods, much more calm than Wilbur. "I didn't say I disagreed, Will. Just wanted to make sure we were on the same page here."

"Good." Wilbur retorts, and his shoulders relax just a little more. "Good. Because the boy is never going to have to do that shit again, not if I can help it."

There's a moment of silence where Phil just stares at him, and then the man smiles.

"I'm proud of you, you know." Phil reaches up a steady hand to settle on his shoulder.

"I know." Wilbur replies just as softly.

Techno chimes in from across the room. "You guys done being all mushy over there? Because if not I'll just stay. You know. Over here."

Wilbur tackles him into a hug.

The boy wakes up, and the talk they have is short and demoralizing. It's clear he doesn't trust them, not one bit, and even Phil's gentle smiles can't set him at ease. If anything they make him more upset.

But the boy is also smart, and he clearly realizes the gang isn't letting him go anywhere anytime soon. Eventually he caves.

They settle him back into the medbay room, just for now. It's not suitable for entertainment or luxury or anything really, but Phil worries that giving him a real room will just overwhelm him. Not to mention all the hiding spots and materials he could find in there. They're all not exactly too keen on giving him another possible weapon.

So the medbay it is. Just until the kid acclimates.

Problem is, he doesn't. Four days later, and if anything the situation has gotten worse.

The kid won't talk. Won't eat. Won't even sleep, if Technoblade's reports are correct, and not only that but he's apparently also been trying to escape each night on a snapped arm and five broken ribs.

Wilbur can't help but worry they're doing more harm than good. That they're killing him too, just a little slower.

On the morning of the fifth day Technoblade tells them the boy has finally given in to sleep. On the evening of the fifth day, the boy walks in and *speaks*. And eats. And introduces himself. Like a normal, functioning human being.

It's safe to say Wilbur is shocked.

Somehow, in a matter of hours, *Technoblade* has gotten the boy--Tommy--to open up. The very same Technoblade who barely smiles and considers sharpening swords a fun hobby, has formed some sort of a bond with him. Even now, he is staring at the boy standing in his cape with a look he usually saves for Wilbur and Phil. Something fiercely protective. Something tender.

Wilbur, on the other hand, can barely stand to look at the kid. Every time he does all he can see is the pale, blood covered kid cradled in his arms, struggling for breath, and it is yet another reminder that it's because of him.

So he avoids the kid like the plague.

His nightmares are back again. He wakes up each night in a cold sweat, gasping for breath, sure he sees the shadow of his father standing at the edge of his bed, watching him. It terrifies him enough that one night he even goes into Phil's room, like he did sixteen years ago, back when he was eight. Phil doesn't even do a double take when he wakes up to Wilbur standing by his bedside. He just lifts the blanket and shuffles over to make room. Wilbur curls into his side.

Phil understands. He always understands.

Despite himself, despite the stab of self-hatred he feels every time he looks at Theseus, he finds himself spending his days shadowing the boy.

At first, he watches footage from their security cameras. It's the gang's standard protocol now to have one of them watching him at all times, a practice put into place to make sure the kid doesn't hurt himself, but Wilbur finds that it's rather enjoyable to watch as the boy explores his new room. It becomes less of a chore and more of a pastime, as creepy as he knows it sounds.

Tommy is just amusing to watch, always so curious, poking and prodding at the different furniture in the horrifyingly red room Technoblade has placed him in. He spends at least half an hour of his first night in the room just jumping on his bed. Wilbur starts to pick up some of Technoblade's extra security camera shifts.

And then, one day, the kid leaves and goes to explore the halls. Wilbur watches that with mild amusement too. Some days all he does is sit in the security room and watch as the boy explores.

Other days he sits outside the library and listens as the boy and Techno read. They don't talk much, but when they do it's soft. Familiar. Wilbur pretends he doesn't notice the tiny twinge of jealousy that courses through him when they whisper things he can't quite make out, when Techno huffs out one of his rare, precious laughs.

He wishes he could talk with the boy like that. He wishes.

But he doesn't really deserve that, does he? Not after him getting so injured was his fault in the first place. The boy--Tommy--probably hates him anyway. He should just be happy that the kid is here and he is safe and they're not going to let him get hurt ever again. That should be enough. It is enough.

So he avoids the kid.

Problem is, it's not just him and Tommy in the base. Phil and Technoblade are there too, and apparently things are just going *swell* for them when they chat with the kid. They seem to be

getting along just *fine*. And it *apparently* has become a big issue for them that Wilbur and the boy don't.

Philza scolds him, cornering him as he's practicing in the firing range one afternoon and tells him that this rift in the base will only grow worse with time. That ignoring the kid won't solve anything. Wilbur knows he's right, but it still doesn't stop him from locking himself into his room for the rest of the night.

Technoblade is much more subtle with it, but Wilbur can tell he's nearing his last straw too. He glares at Wilbur every time the two pass each other, bumping their shoulders. He never says anything, but the message is clear.

Wilbur suspects they've gone soft.

He's not an idiot. He's been watching, and he sees.

He sees the way Techno gently carries Theseus back to his room each night, swaddling him in his favorite cape. He sees how Phil's face lights up when the boy goes out to garden with him.

They clearly don't have the same gloom of guilt hanging over them as Wilbur, and as the days pass with him and Tommy still pointedly ignoring each other the two of them get increasingly frustrated at the tension in the base.

“Come to dinner.” Phil practically begs him on the afternoon that marks two entire weeks of Theseus staying with them. “Just once. He'll be there. Talk it out. It's not your fault, Will.”

Phil is wrong and they both know it, but Wilbur can't bring himself to say no. Phil's always been hard to deny.

He plans to go. Philza is right, Techno is right. He's a leader of the Antarctic gang for Prime's sake. Talking to one child shouldn't be a problem.

But then he looks in the mirror. And all he can see is the silhouette of his father, standing just over his shoulder, looking down at him like, for once, he's proud.

Wilbur doesn't go to dinner.

Chapter End Notes

hope you enjoyed!

you'll find out just exactly why wilbur feels oh so guilty in around two chapters. it will be upsetting. :))

see you soon!

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